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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 002001

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)
SUBJECT: PARTY CONGRESS EXPOSES ZANU-PF DIVISIONS

REF: (A) HARARE 1914 (B) HARARE 1913

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher W. Dell under Section 1.5 b/d

1. (C) SUMMARY: ZANU-PF's Fourth Party Congress reinforced Robert Mugabe's unassailable authority atop a ruling party suffering from roiling ethnic and generational tensions. Recent personnel changes adjustments to the party leadership suggest the ascendancy of Mugabe's Zezuru faction and a victory of the party's Old Guard over the Young Turks, although further adjustments in the coming months may yet mollify disaffected groups and key individuals. Although the Congress sounded familiar anti-Western themes, the apparent political demise of the party's most rabidly anti-Western mouthpiece, Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, may foreshadow a toning down of xenophobic rhetoric from the GOZ. Nonetheless, the ruling party remains unlikely to undertake meaningful efforts toward rapprochement with either the opposition or the West for now. END SUMMARY.

Discord

2. (U) President Mugabe's public criticism of "ambitious" party members who contributed to party disunity was the most striking aspect of the Party Congress. To loud but not unanimous applause at the opening session, he castigated unnamed provincial chairmen for undertaking efforts without adequately consulting "the people." He stressed the importance of party unity and the need for those who lost political contests to accept defeat. Expanding on the theme of loyalty and discipline, Party Chairman John Nkomo's address to the opening session emphasized the importance of deferring to experience and demanded the sanctioning of unnamed individuals who were contributing to party disunity. More explicit about intra-party tensions in subsequent closed session, Mugabe reportedly denounced "narrow-minded" party members who focused on purported needs for regional and tribal balance.

Suspensions Precede Congress

3. (U) On the eve of the Congress, the state media announced that the Politburo on November 30 had suspended six provincial chairpersons for six months: July Moyo (Midlands; also Minister of Energy), Mark Madiro (Manicaland), Daniel Shumba (Masvingo; also telecom magnate), Jacob Mudenda (Matabeleland North), Lloyd Siyoka (Matabeleland South), and Thomas Ncube (Bulawayo). The six had attended an "unauthorized" meeting organized in Tsholotsho two weeks earlier by Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, in which participants reportedly planned to derail the impending selection by the party of Joyce Mujuru for the party's vacant vice-presidential slot. According to the state press, the Politburo officially reprimanded but did not suspend the Information Minister and suspended war veterans leader Jabulani Sibanda for four years. Speaker of the Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa, who would have been the principal beneficiary of the meeting's designs, had been invited to Tsholotsho but chose to attend a Politburo meeting instead (a

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meeting at which he was forced to accede to Mugabe's instruction that a vice-presidential slot be reserved for a woman).

Familiar Themes

4. (U) In his keynote speech on December 2 at ZANU-PF's Fourth Party Congress, President and Party First Secretary Mugabe hit on familiar themes in exhorting his party to remain united and resist threats from outside and inside the country. Consistent with the banners announcing the 2005 election as the "anti-Blair election," Mugabe devoted considerable attention in his 90-minute speech to Britain's purported designs on reversing land reform and effecting regime change. Noting that 400 British companies continued to operate profitably in the Zimbabwe, he urged the HMG to reverse its anti-Zimbabwe posture. He drew parallels between purported USG and HMG lies about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq with Western "lies" underlying "sanctions" against

Zimbabwe. He launched into a homophobic diatribe about the West's "rotteness of culture and un-Christian example" and concluded that Africa should be teaching the West about morality, not vice-versa. The MDC leadership did not figure largely in the President's public remarks, other than to be cast as a British "stooge" and be criticized for courting opinion overseas instead of at home. The President thanked regional groupings SADC, the AU, and COMESA for their friendship and support. He also elaborated on familiar development-related themes, including anti-corruption efforts and the importance of addressing HIV/AIDS seriously, and conceded that the party needed to do more to make land reform more successful.

Backbenchers Vent With Ambassador

15. (C) At a lunch with the Ambassador on November 24, ZANU-PF backbench MPs Pearson Mbelekwa (Zvishavane; Chairperson of the Justice Committee), Kindness Paradza (Makonde; publisher of the shuttered Tribune), and Walter Mzembi (Masvingo South; Zvobgo faction winner of most recent parliamentary by-election) were candid about tensions within the party over Joyce Mujuru's selection. They asserted that the intense VP contest had left wounds that would take a long time to heal. Speculating that the party might not survive in its current form until 2008 (the next presidential election), they described the party as in crisis, with some members saying "we've had enough" while others were counseling patience. The group and other younger leading members had joined the ruling party to "fight from within" and chafed over their lack of influence. Everybody was struggling with "generational change management," with Mugabe effectively atop the party through a masterly exercise of divide and rule. Nonetheless, they expressed confidence that Mugabe would step down as President in 2008 -- assuming he had a Politburo he trusted.

16. (C) The group was especially distressed over the exclusion of Karanga (Zimbabwe's most numerous ethnic group) representation in the presidium. They asserted that elements that who had contributed and suffered most in the liberation effort, including the Ndebele and Manyika, were not being included sufficiently in the upper echelons of the restructured party. They made it clear that Mnangagwa was their preferred choice for the presidium. Mbelekwa, who had written a stout defense of Mnangagwa in the Financial Gazette the previous week, dubbed the Speaker "Zimbabwe's Gorbachev." He asserted that Mnangagwa wanted to strengthen relations with the United States and Britain as well as to refurbish the country's tarnished investment climate. He had cordial relations with the MDC and was responsible for a moderate approach to land reform in his province, Midlands, that spared it from the chaos associated with the rest of the country.

17. (C) The group forecast continued jockeying and intra-party conflict over the appointment of a new Politburo. They claimed that the Central Committee (expanded by the Congress from 232 to 240 members) already was "packed" and offered little appeal as a path of influence in any event. Cabinet positions in the 40-member Politburo, which usually were associated with control over resources, were crucial to factions and aspiring leaders. Parliamentary seats, filled by genuine contests in which candidates could appeal to the electorate, were good entrees for the younger generation, and the Parliament was beginning to assert itself as an institution. The group suggested that campaigns for the upcoming primaries and MP elections would revolve around factional rivalries and local "deliverables" (clinics, schools, roads) rather than national policy. They lamented the general "drought of skills" within the party relative to the government.

18. (C) The group asserted that 80 percent of the MDC were Karanga, many of whom would be inclined to link up with ZANU-PF's Karanga faction under the right circumstances. Remarkably, one suggested that the MDC would win a majority of contested seats in the upcoming election if the opposition was given even four weeks of free and fair access to the electorate. Another conceded that the ruling party's record of failure left it nothing to run on but an "anti-Blair" platform.

Mnangagwa Down But Not Out

19. (C) Mnangagwa remains a pivotal figure in Zimbabwean politics and Mugabe reportedly met with him at length after the party's nomination of Mujuru. Notwithstanding his loss in the Veepstakes and the displacement of many of his key supporters, Mnangagwa remains the leading exponent of Karanga interests in the GOZ. Mnangagwa also has garnered significant support among the party's Young Turks, as evidenced by the Ambassador's exchange with the backbenchers. Always a careful balancer of factional interests, Mugabe can

be expected to take steps to appease Mnangagwa and his supporters. Indeed, many of Mnangagwa's supporters were named to the new Central Committee, and Mnangagwa himself, despite his association with the Tsholotsho group, so far has retained his positions as Parliamentary Speaker and Party Secretary for Administration. An additional possibility

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would be his assumption of the office of Prime Minister, which is expected to be created via constitutional amendment should ZANU-PF win a 2/3 majority in Parliament in March as expected.

Moyo Down And Out?

10. (C) The Tsholotsho imbroglio was driven not just by Mnangagwa opponents but also in large part by a widespread impetus within the party to rid itself of the mercurial Moyo, who was pilloried for organizing the meeting. The knives have long been out for Moyo, who had deployed the state media in vitriolic attacks against VP Msika and Chairman Nkomo, among other party potentates. Their successful casting of such attacks and the Tsholotsho meeting as disloyal to the President and undermining of party unity was sufficient pretext for the President to clip his wings. Moyo was not named to the Central Committee, reportedly has had to cede some of his control over the state media, and is not expected to retain his position as Information Minister in a new Cabinet. His political survival, at best in significantly diminished status, may depend on his ability to win the Tsholotsho parliamentary seat. After dispensing large

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amounts of GOZ largesse on the district, Moyo had been favored in the run-up to the Congress, but his prospects have dimmed considerably.

Comment

11. (C) The flap over the so-called Tsholotsho Declaration and related suspensions speaks volumes about the extent of ZANU-PF's internal democracy and Mugabe's control over the party. Reprising a sequence last year when Mugabe invited discussion over succession and then slapped down those who took him up on it, Mugabe in recent months publicly and privately emphasized that the contests for party leadership slots were to be open and real. Indeed, Mugabe's instruction for a female VP did not identify who the female was to be and he allowed the contest to proceed. The Tsholotsho meeting was part of a VP selection process that was engineered to appear genuinely competitive right up to the weekend that the provincial executives made their VP nominations (ref A). However, the true Mugabe view reasserted itself in the final stages of the process when a near hysterical Mugabe reportedly told the Politburo that he was boss, he made all the decisions, and any questioning of his views was tantamount to treason. One can only assume that the wily Mugabe had all along prepared just such a scenario in order to smoke out and then crush any and all opposition within the party. His successful positioning of Joyce Mujuru gives him the ideal putative heir for now: a popular figure nationally who boosts his party's image and who will be difficult for critics inside or outside the party to attack effectively, but one who has shown little overt ambition for senior leadership (her tendered resignation for family reasons some years ago was refused by the President) and who is fully beholden to him.

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